



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

"The difference between an egg and the primitive condition of world system, is this : A chicken existed before the egg, and the egg develops a chicken because it represents the life-memories of many millions of chicken ancestors. The egg would not exist but for the hen. The hen transmits certain forms of motion which are the sum total of all the experiences of herself and her ancestors to a part of her body, *the ovule*. The ovule, when fertilised, grows and is excreted as an egg.

The famous question, "Which was first, the hen or the egg?" must be answered : "Neither." Living protoplasm was first, which under certain conditions produced the egg-bearing hen.

In a certain sense a nebula contains all the conditions for producing a planetary system and, on the surface of its planets, of living beings such as we are. Matter, the substance of a nebula, it must be assumed, possesses the qualities of motion and irritability, which by proper organisation become sentiency. The world-material can, merely through certain combinations in a long process of evolution, develop the higher forms of existence, organic life, consciousness and rational will. This evolution is inherent in existence through that impalpable something which we call laws of form ; yet there is nothing in the world-process that evolves transmitted memories containing a special form of life and that form only. There is no world-hen who imparted her experiences and intelligence to the produce of her creatures.

A stellar nebula is a potential solar system, animated on its planets with rational beings. So the egg is a potential chick. The development of both is determined by their constitution, but while in the former the eternal laws of nature seem to play the most important part, the latter is typically a repetition of prior action and is a new start for the reappearance of the type of its ancestors.

The law of the conservation of matter and energy declares that the sum total of all energy and the sum total of all matter remain constant in the entire system of the universe. That which is not constant is the form ; and new forms can be produced from the old forms in an unlimited amount of possibilities. But the changes of form take place according to eternal laws of form the recognition of which assists us both in tracing the process of evolution and in forming as well as realising our ideals of life.

P. C.

BRINTON'S THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION.

In the winter of 1891 a movement was started in Philadelphia for the purpose of instituting popular courses in the History of Religions. Each course was to consist of from six to eight lectures and the engagement of lecturers, choice of subjects, etc., were to be in the hands of a committee chosen from different cities and representing various institutions and associations. The first course was given by Prof. T. W. Rhys-Davids, Ph. D., LL. D., of London, England, on the subject, The History and Literature of Buddhism. As the second lecturer, the late Prof.

Daniel G. Brinton of Philadelphia was chosen, and he delivered a course of six lectures on the Religions of Primitive Peoples. These lectures were delivered during the winter of 1896-1897 and they have since appeared in a neat volume issued by G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York.

Dr. Brinton, who at the time of his death held the chair of American Archæology and Linguistics in the University of Pennsylvania, was a leading authority on the language and customs of the American Indians and on Anthropology in general. As is well known, he was a careful student of his chosen subjects and a most prolific writer. In several of his books and articles he turned his attention to religion, but nowhere has he given the subject so thorough a treatment as in his latest work. He there presents, with a large accumulation of facts in regard to early religious beliefs and practices, a theory of the origin of religion which it is the purpose of this article to consider.

As is usual with writers on religion Dr. Brinton begins by stating the various theories in regard to its origin and after a brief consideration of each rejects them all. It is necessary, he says, if we are going to apply the scientific method to the study of religions to offer an intelligible explanation of their existence, an explanation which is verifiable and which holds good for all of them, primitive or developed. This, he thinks, has not been done up to the present time.

Having cleared the ground, he lays down the proposition that "the psychic origin of all religious thought is the recognition, or, if you please, the assumption, that conscious volition is the ultimate source of all force." It is his belief that "beyond the sensuous phenomenal world, distinct from it, giving form, existence and activity, lies the ultimate, invisible, immeasurable, power of Mind, of conscious Will, of Intelligence, analogous in some way to our own; and—mark this essential corollary,—that man is in communication with it" (p. 47).

This, on the face of it, may not appear to be markedly different from the theories in vogue since Tylor and others set forth the principles of animism, but it is quite different as the careful capitalisation of mind, will, and intelligence in the above quotation might be taken to indicate. His real postulate is that the primitive man recognised that all he saw about him was but a manifestation of an impersonal, spiritual Power lying beyond or behind reality. That he accredits the primitive man with the degree of philosophic insight necessary for the recognition of this rather modern philosophic doctrine is evident from many passages in the book. I will quote but one: "The idea of the world-soul, manifesting itself individually in every form of matter from the star to the clod, is as truly the belief of the Sioux Indian or the Fijian cannibal as it was of Spinoza or Giordano Bruno" (p. 135). I do not misrepresent his theory then, when I say that his fundamental postulate is that of a universal intelligence which is recognised by primitive men. He does not seem to have reflected upon the well-known fact that Spinoza was persecuted and Bruno was burned for their belief in the animation of all matter.

Now, the question at once arises, How did this fundamental idea, this primitive

"conception of the Divine" originate? Dr. Brinton is ready to explain it, and in attempting to do so he resorts to a method which is ingenious, whatever we may say of its scientific value.

We all know what an interesting region in psychology is that known as the subliminal consciousness. We know that, as yet, only its boundaries have been explored. We know not what curious facts its further exploration may reveal. It is unsafe to predict what may or may not be found in it. I know not what may have induced Dr. Brinton to turn to this comparatively unknown territory for an explanation of the fundamental religious idea; but, at all events, he does do so and sets it forth with all the confidence and satisfaction of a discoverer. It is not the product of any conscious act of intelligence or any process of voluntary reason, he tells us, it comes "from the unknown, the unplumbed abyss of the sub-conscious mind." "In the subliminal consciousness, or psychic automatism, I have revealed to you," he declares, "the true source of the conception of the Divine."

It is difficult to see how this conception of the Divine could be derived from the subliminal consciousness, unless in the subconscious action of the mind we have a real manifestation of Divinity, and Brinton does not seek to avoid this conclusion. He evidently accepts it, but he points to no facts to prove it; simply because there are no such facts. One terminus of his thought lies beyond the boundary of fact and consequently of science. Even if we should grant that he has discovered the true source of the conception of the Divine, we should still wonder by what authority he gives so high a value to a conception derived from so uncertain a source. The lameness of his whole argument may be seen in the following statement: "Who dare deny," he says, "that in their unconscious functions our minds may catch some over-tones, as it were, from the harmonies of the universal intelligence thus demonstrated by inductive research (*sic*) and vibrate in unison therewith?" Who, indeed? But, on the other hand, who dare affirm such a proposition as a scientific fact. It seems to the ordinary mind that such uncertain statements should have no place in a book which professes to apply the scientific method to the study of religions.

With this universal intelligence now and then revealed through subconscious mental action, we can see why Animism, the belief in individual spirits, or Comte's theory of the progress of religious development through fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism, must, in Dr. Brinton's opinion, fall to the ground. There is no real distinction between fetishism and idolatry, for the thing worshipped is not the object itself, or an individual spirit resident in the object, but "a transcendental *X*" manifesting itself through the object.

Now, I think it is easy to show, and it has been shown by Tylor and others, that in order of time the idea of individual spirits preceded the idea of a world spirit, and it is difficult to see how Dr. Brinton could contend for the opposite in the face of the vast array of facts which gleam from almost every modern work on anthropology and even from the pages of his own book. It would seem that the

general idea of a universal intelligence, when reached at all, would be arrived at either from a generalisation of beliefs in individual spirits, or from a philosophic speculation in regard to the nature of the universe far beyond the mental ability of the primitive man. What does the primitive man know about will or mind? Nothing at all. His first generalisation is, perhaps, in regard to objects which move without visible cause. He has accomplished, for him, quite an intellectual feat when he concludes that such objects are alive and infers that they are individual beings like himself. The natural outcome of his thought is Animism. But, Dr. Brinton declares that while Animism, in one guise or another, "is common to all religions and many philosophies, it is merely a secondary phenomenon of the religious sentiment and not a trait characteristic of primitive faiths." But this declaration is denied by the very facts which he presents. Quoting a remark of Professor Sayce in regard to the early Chaldeans to the effect that to them the spiritual was that which manifested life and the test of life, which was movement, he adds, "this is universally true of primitive faiths." This seems much more probable than that in primitive faiths the universe was regarded as alive. Again, he does not seem to see the implication of his explanation of the process of thought by which the primitive man assigned mind to nature. It is illustrated, he says, in the action of any child, and he then uses the familiar illustration of the gratification of a child on seeing an object which has in some manner injured it punished as a living being. A similar process takes place in the mind of primitive man. "Wherever he perceives motion independent of a living being he assumes the presence of a conscious agent not visible to his senses" (p. 49). The obvious implication of this fact is Animism; but, Dr. Brinton does not see it so. It is much more likely that the primitive man regarded motion in nature as evidence of life in the particular object under observation than that he reached a conclusion that it was the immediate exhibition of a universal will. Dr. Brinton virtually presents the untutored savage as a primitive Emerson speculating on the doctrine of the over-soul. All that is true in his theory is to my mind animistic, and that which is not true is subjective and is carried to the facts, not found in them.

In illustration of the last remark I may refer to his theory of the subconscious intelligence as an explanation of the primitive religious conception. I know no better illustration of reading a theory into the facts, of carrying back one's own conceptions into the crude philosophy of primitive men. The "philosophy of the unconscious," the theory of psychic automatism, is modern. Suggestion and hypnotism have only recently been the subject of psychic investigation. But, since psychology proclaims, with more or less certainty, the existence of a subliminal consciousness, it is at once seized upon and carried back into primitive philosophy as an explanation of the thought of primitive man. This "unplumbed abyss of the subconscious mind" offers undoubted opportunities for angling; but it is surprising to find Dr. Brinton, a scientist, fishing out of it the primitive conception of the Divine.

But a still more unscientific proceeding is the identification of the subconscious mind with the Divine mind, and this, as I have said, Brinton virtually does. He speaks of the Shaman and the Medicine Man as having been "face to face with God, having heard His voice and felt His presence" (p. 58). They are inspired by a contact with the divine intelligence, and in this state of inspiration we find the "psychic development" of the primitive idea of the Divine, the notion of God.

Speaking of inspiration in this special sense, we are not surprised to find Dr. Brinton making far more of it than facts justify. With him such an almost mediumistic inspiration is the basis of every religion. He distinctly declares that there can be no religion without it.

Now, nothing seems more clear than that this idea and the spiritualistic conception of a doctrine of inspiration are a direct outgrowth of the phenomena of possession and obsession which are yet to be explained. It is quite gratuitous to say at this stage of psychological investigation, as Dr. Brinton does, that "the human soul, regarded in its origin as an emanation of the Divine, is in its nature omniscient, when in moments of ecstasy it frees itself from its material envelope" (p. 51). So-called inspiration may be due to the operation of the subliminal consciousness; but to refer one unexplained phenomenon to another unexplained phenomenon can hardly be regarded as a scientific explanation. There can be no doubt that the mental states now studied under suggestion and hypnotism, etc., have played a great part in all religions. But it cannot correctly be said that religion is due to them. Manifestations of the subconscious intelligence were, doubtless, to the primitive man like all other inexplicable phenomena, or, rather, like all other phenomena which he could explain on no other hypothesis than to assign them to the influence of the gods.

In the theory of Dr. Brinton, and in many passages in his book, there are evidences of a theological bias. Doubtless this bias, and his undue haste to utilise some half-formed conclusions in psychology, led him into the vagaries of his theory of the origin of religion. As evidences of this theological bias many passages could be cited, but one must suffice. In speaking of certain ceremonies connected with primitive religions he says: "The Psychologist sees in them all the same inherent tendency, the same yearning of the feeble human soul to reach out towards and make itself a part of the Divine Mind" (p. 191). We can easily imagine the palatability of such a remark to a certain class of theologians who have much to say about the bankruptcy of science.

There is one other criticism which applies not so much to Dr. Brinton's theory of the origin of religion, as to his idea of what constitutes religion. In my opinion he falls short of a true understanding of the nature of religion. Religion is not a "notion of the divine," as he implies; nor is it a belief, or a system of beliefs. If he had the true conception of the nature of religion, he could never say, as he does (p. 53), that there can be no religion without inspiration or that every religion is a revelation. Religion is not "a system of activities to obtain beatitude, blessing,

righteousness, truth, and wisdom, as the chief good by enlisting the good offices of unseen beings in the unseen world."¹ Religion should be carefully distinguished from beliefs about religion. Most of the attacks aimed at religion have been in reality directed against theology. The editor of this journal advocates with great earnestness and intelligence, a religion of science, but in the sense in which I use the term religion, and which, in my judgment, is the correct meaning when speaking of its origin, there can be no such thing. What is really meant is that the beliefs growing out of religion should be purified by science; that is, that there should be a science of religion rather than a religion of science. Religion, traced back to its origin, is the recognition on the part of primitive men, or of members of sub-human species, that there were powers or agents outside of themselves which might help them or harm them, and the desire to be in right relation with these agencies. The desire arose from fear of agencies which, by the primitive mind, were interpreted as spiritual, and the hope of propitiating these agents led to acts of worship. Religion appearing in the individual was through a sort of principle of spontaneous variation laid hold of by the social group and utilised in the construction of religious systems. Knowledge and belief, hope and desire, are all, then, at the basis of religion.

If this conception of religion is correct, the theory proposed by Dr. Brinton in his study of primitive religions is deficient in that it not only gives a poor explanation of the phenomena which it starts out to explain, but it also seeks to explain a phenomenon which is not religion.

I. W. HOWERTH.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

A STRANGE ATTACK ON SOME PHYSICAL THEORIES.

In the October, 1899, number of *The Monist* appeared an article by the Hon. Chas. H. Chase on "The Doctrine of Conservation of Energy in Its Relation to the Elimination of Force as a Factor in the Cosmos." The writer's main object is to show that all energy cannot be explained, or expressed, in terms of motion, and that force cannot be identified with kinetic energy. Whatever the validity of these theories may be (and they are certainly not original with Mr. Chase), I would like to call attention to some of the mathematical reasoning by which Mr. Chase claims to have established them beyond all doubt.

He starts his mathematical "demonstrations" by telling us that, in the collision of two inelastic bodies of masses m and m' , moving with velocities v and v' , the momentum M and the kinetic energy E , before collision, are given by the formulas, $M = mv + m'v'$, and $E = \frac{1}{2}mv^2 + \frac{1}{2}m'v'^2$; and, after collision, by the formulas, $M' = \frac{1}{2}(m + m')(v + v')$, and $E' = \frac{1}{2}(m + m')\frac{(v + v')^2}{4}$. He says that, ac-

¹ Major Powell in *The Monist*, January 1898, p. 187.